

# Index

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The three levels of Government in Australia | 2  |
| Local Government                            | 3  |
| State Government                            | 4  |
| Federal Government                          | 5  |
| The Constitution and Federation             | 6  |
| Changing the Constitution                   | 7  |
| The Separation of Powers                    | 8  |
| What does Parliament do?                    | 9  |
| Accountability to Parliament                | 10 |
| How does Parliament pass a bill?            | 11 |
| Parliament House                            | 12 |
| Facts about Parliament House                | 13 |
| House of Representatives                    | 14 |
| Senate                                      | 15 |
| Who's who in Federal Parliament             | 16 |
| The Prime Minister                          | 17 |
| Presiding Officers                          | 18 |
| The Governor-General                        | 19 |
| Question Time                               | 20 |
| The Budget                                  | 21 |
| Your Federal Electorate: Shortland          | 22 |
| Your Federal Representative: Jill Hall MP   | 24 |
| Your rights                                 | 26 |
| Firsts                                      | 27 |
| Australia's Prime Ministers                 | 28 |
| Glossary                                    | 29 |
| Quick Quiz                                  | 33 |
| State Members and Councillors               | 34 |
| Ministry & Shadow Ministry                  | 35 |
| Example of Whip's Tally Sheet               | 40 |

# The Three Levels of Government in Australia

Every day in Australia, we make lots of decisions to satisfy our needs. These can be made by one person or a group. Families, schools and clubs make decisions, which we call rules.

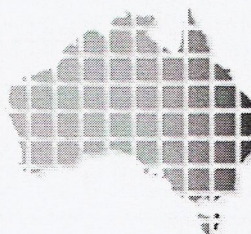
Rules are made by our Parliaments to keep order and to allow fairness in our community. These rules are called laws. It is the job of the Government to carry out the laws made by Parliament.

Decisions need to be made to solve many problems that arise in local communities, states or territories and in the nation as a whole. These decisions are made by groups of people who are elected by citizens living in a particular area.

There are three levels of Government in Australia. Each level provides different services to people:

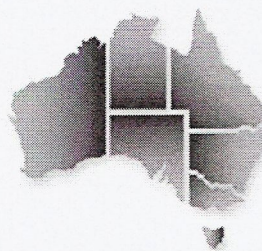
## 1. Local

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



## 2. State

STATE GOVERNMENT



## 3. Federal

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



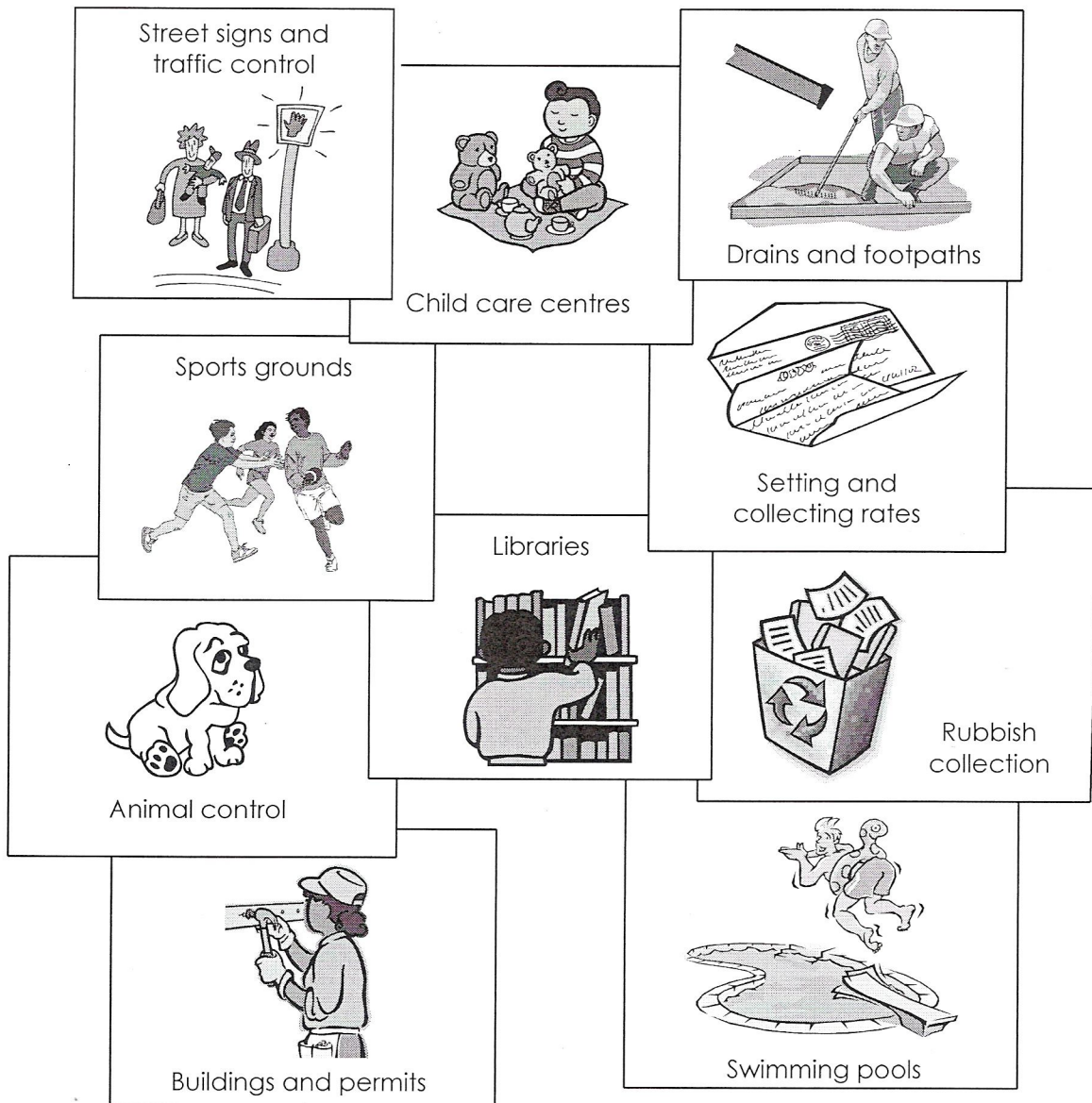


# Local Government

Local Governments service the needs of local communities. Local councils make decisions on local, town or city matters through laws called by-laws.

There are about 700 local governments in Australia. These may be known as municipalities, shires, boroughs, towns or cities depending on where you live. Councillors or Alderman are elected to represent the people who live in that community. The Mayor or Shire President leads the council or shire.

Local Government taxes (called rates) are collected from land owners. These, along with money grants from the State and Federal Government, pay for the following local Government services:



# State Government

Each State or Territory has its own Government and Parliament. Members of the State Parliament are elected to represent each state and to make laws about state matters. The Premier is the leader of the State Government.

Each of the States, except Queensland, has two houses of Parliament. The Lower House is called the Legislative Assembly or the House of Assembly. The Upper House is called the Legislative Council. The Parliaments of each Territory have only one house, called a Legislative Assembly.

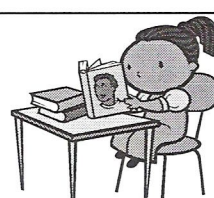
State Governments raise money from taxes on goods and services, and they also receive grants from the Federal Government. Some services for which the state governments are responsible include:



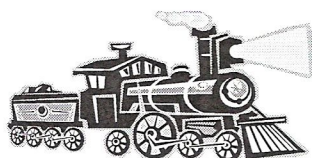
Hospitals



Housing



Schools



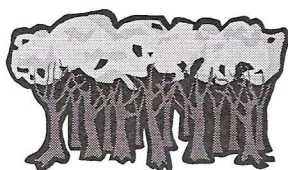
Railways



Community Services



Motor registration



Forestry

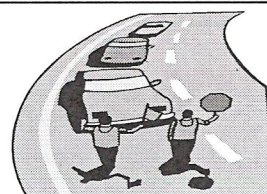
Wildlife  
Protection



Police



Fire brigade and ambulance



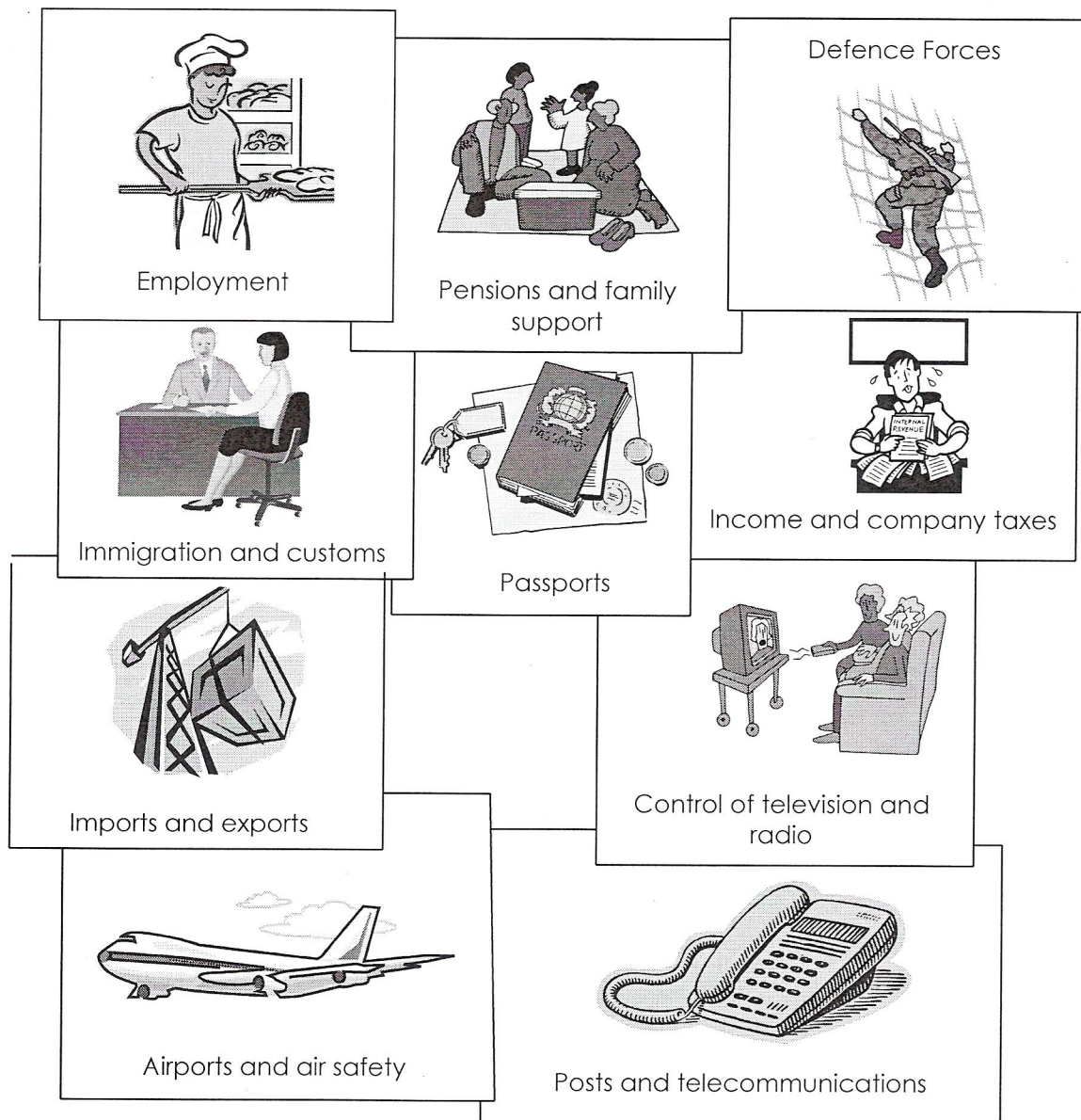
Roads



# Federal Government

The Federal Parliament makes laws for all Australians. The Federal Government is located in Canberra. There are two houses of Parliament: the House of Representatives and the Senate. All Australians vote for Members and Senators to represent them in Parliament. The Prime Minister, who is a member of the House of Representatives, is the leader of the Federal Government.

The Constitution gives the Federal Government more powers than the State and Local Governments in a range of specific areas. If the State and Federal Government make conflicting laws, the Federal Law is the one that is recognised. Some services for which the Federal Government is responsible include:



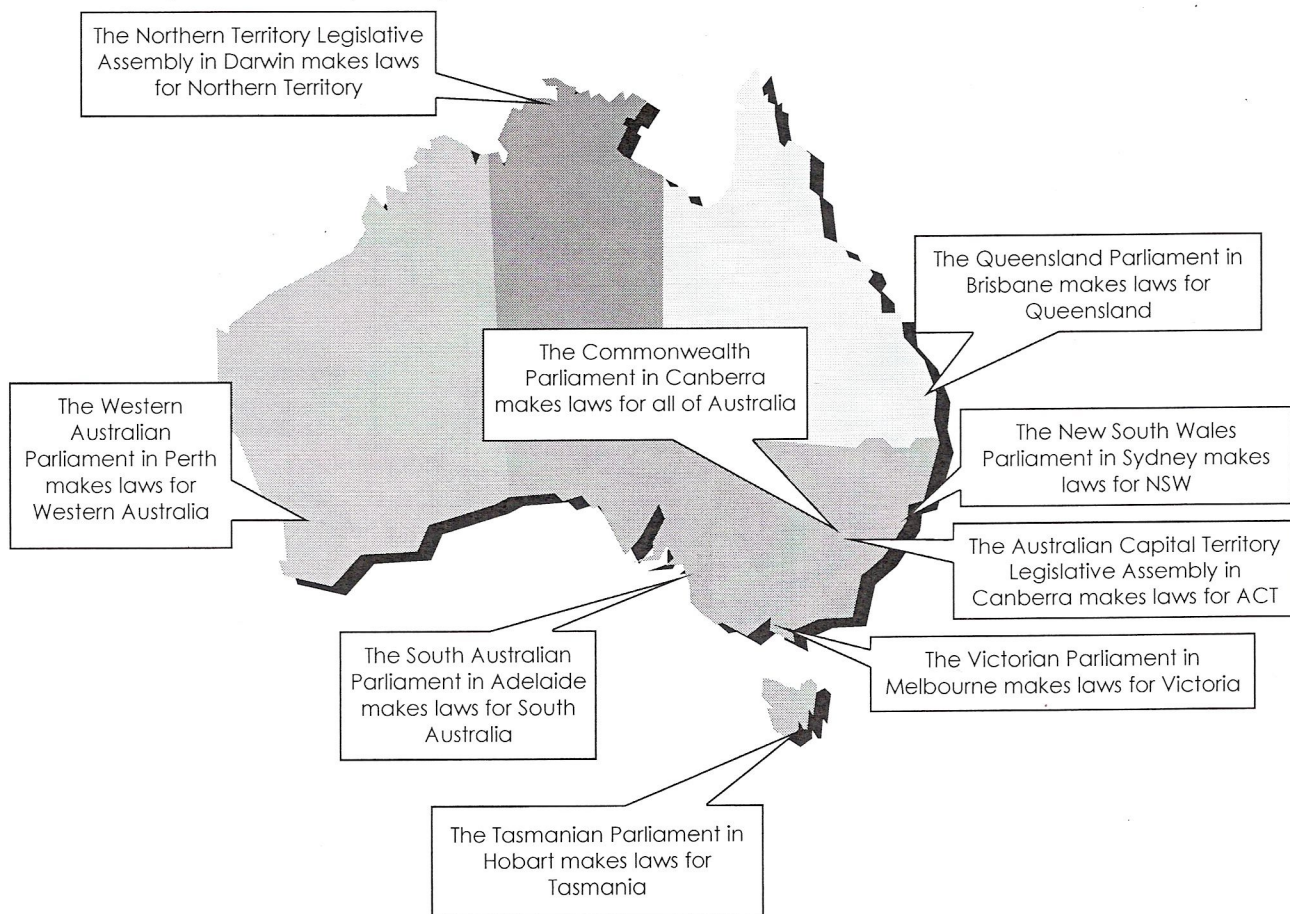
# The Constitution and Federation

The Australian Constitution is a set of rules that say how the country should be run.

Before 1901 Australia was one continent with six colonies (not a nation). In the 1890s the colonies came together to try to form a new Federal Government. Eventually the colonies agreed on a new set of rules– the Constitution.

The people of the colonies voted to accept this new Constitution. With the help of the British Parliament, the nation known as the Commonwealth of Australia came into existence on 1 January 1901. The colonies became states of Australia (and transferred some of their power to the Commonwealth Government) and a new Federal Australian Parliament was formed. This is known as the Australian Federation.

In 1911, the Commonwealth Government created the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. They are not states.



Other federations include the United States of America, Canada, Malaysia, Brazil, Germany and India



# Changing the Constitution

## Can the Constitution be changed?

Yes, the Constitution can be changed. Before the Constitution can be changed, a special vote called a referendum must take place. For this change to take place, a majority of voters in a majority of states must agree.



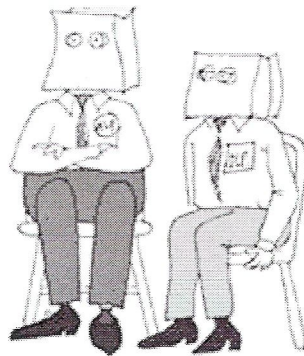
matter.

If there is a law that is passed by Parliament or a Government decision that is made which may not be in agreement with the Constitution, it is taken to the High Court. The High Court, which is made of 7 judges, decides the

## Has the Constitution been changed since 1901?

Yes, there have been 44 referendums since 1901. The Australian people have decided to change the Constitution 8 times.

### Did you know?



Political parties were not recognised in the Constitution until 1977

### Some interesting Referenda since Federation

12 December 1906  
Senate Elections



CARRIED

That both the House of Representatives and the Senate could go to an election together if this was convenient.

22 September 1951  
Communists & Communism



NOT CARRIED

That Commonwealth Parliament could make laws in respect of communists and communism where this was necessary for the security of the nation.

27 May 1967  
Aboriginal rights



CARRIED

That the Constitution should not discriminate against Aboriginal people. At the same time this referendum sought to enact special laws for Aboriginal people.

21 May 1977  
Retirement of judges



CARRIED

That there should be set retiring ages for Federal court judges.

3 September 1988  
Parliamentary terms



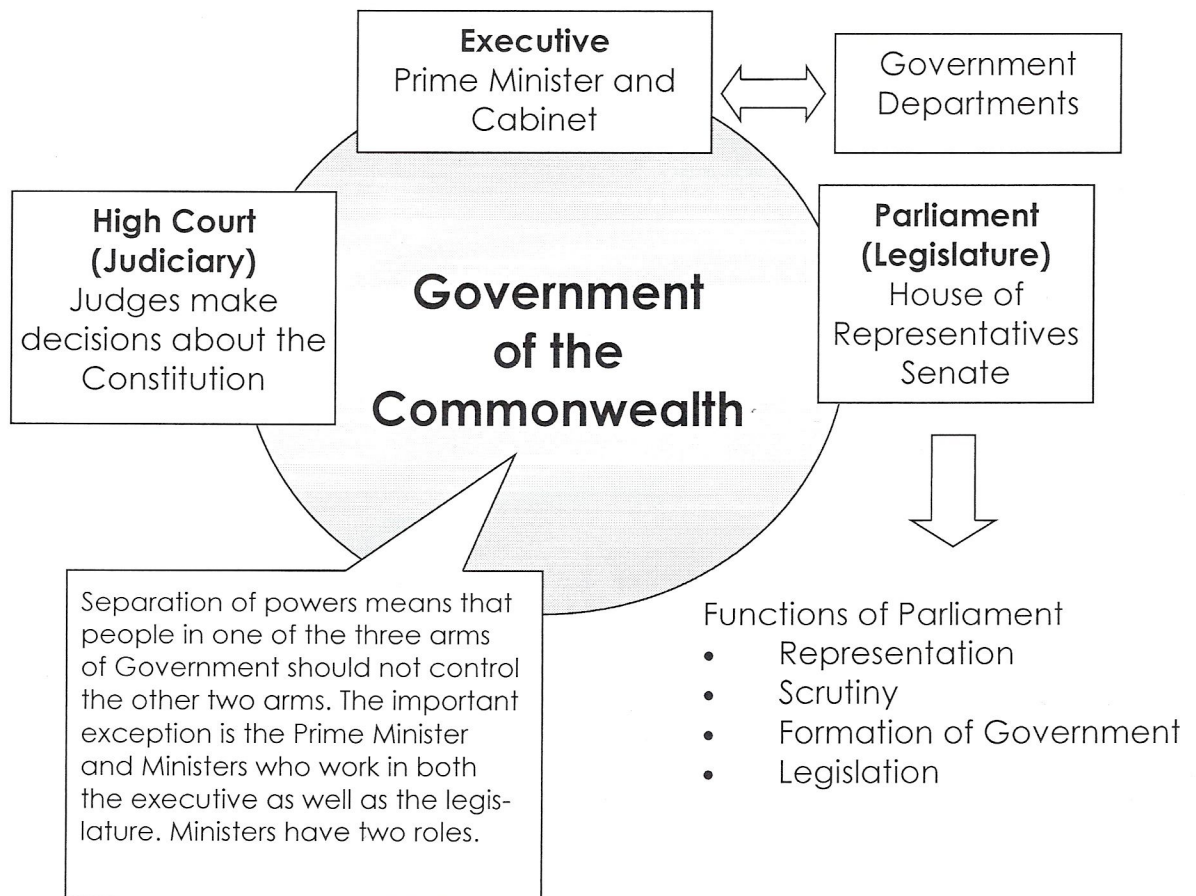
NOT CARRIED

That maximum terms for members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate should be fixed to four years.

# The Separation of Powers

Governing Australia needs lots of power. The Constitution says that this power is divided between three groups of people so they can balance each other. Each group checks the power of the other two. This division of power stops one person or group taking over all the power to govern Australia.

**The doctrine of the separation of powers** was described by Montesquieu in his *L'Esprit des Lois* in 1748. He said that a nation's liberty depended on the separation of the three types of power, **legislative, executive and judicial** with each having their own separate organisation. This policy is a very important part of the Australian Constitution.





# What does Parliament do?

## **Parliament makes laws.**

The most important thing Parliament does is to make new laws and improve old ones.

## **Members of Parliament form the Government.**

The Government consists of Members of the political party which wins an election. This party has the majority of MPs in the House of Representatives. This party chooses the Ministers who run departments (e.g. the Department of Health). All Ministers are Members of Parliament (MPs) and are therefore elected. Most Ministers sit in the House of Representatives although a few sit in the Senate. The Government introduces bills (laws) and runs the country from day to day. The Government is sometimes called the Executive because it executes or carries out the laws made by the Parliament.

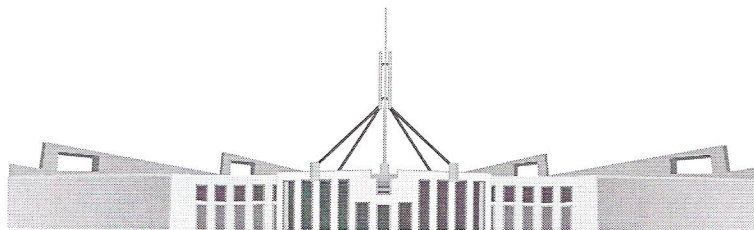
## **Parliament scrutinises the Government.**

The Government or Executive carries out the laws and other decisions of the Parliament. The Parliament also gives power to the Government to do some things without prior approval from Parliament. However, the Parliament likes to check what the Government does. The Parliament;

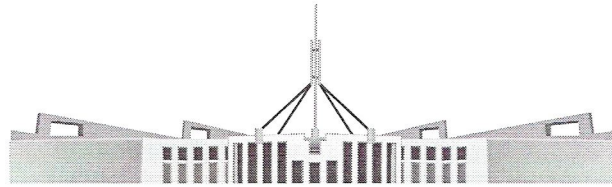
1. Asks the Government questions each day in Question Time in both the House of Representatives and the Senate,
2. Investigates how the Government spends money (Estimates Committees),
3. Sets up Parliamentary Committees to examine bills which the Government wants the Parliament to pass.

## **Parliament represents people.**

All members of Parliament are elected. Each Member of the House of Representatives is elected by and represents about 90,000 voters in an electorate. States with large populations have many MPs. For example, New South Wales has 50 MPs. Senators represent states. Voters in each state are represented by 12 Senators. Each territory has two Senators.



# Parliament House



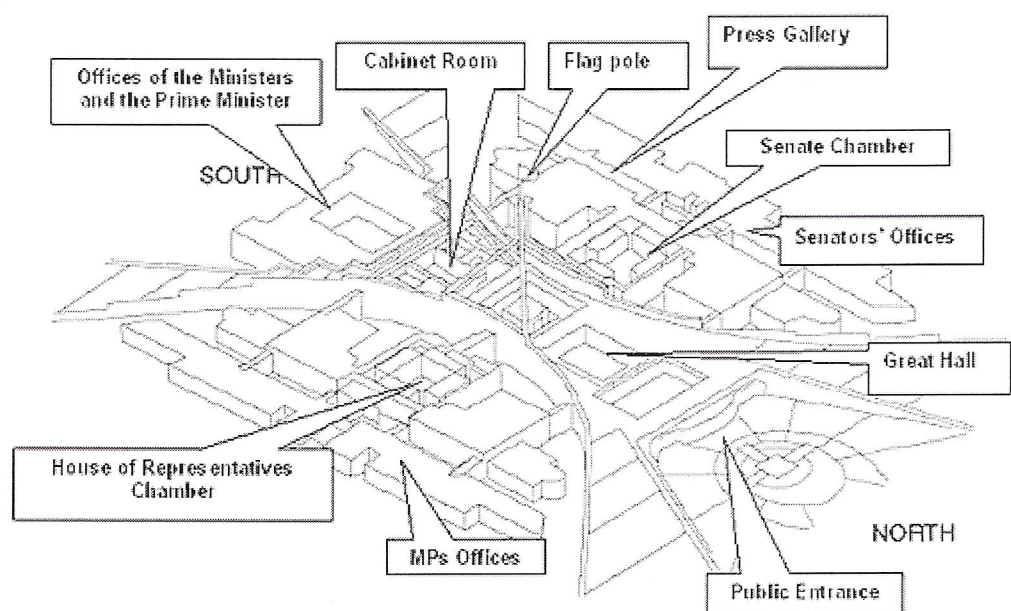
Parliaments are unique. They are not like office blocks or law courts or convention centres. The new Parliament house in Canberra was opened on 9 May 1988. The new Parliament House was designed so that the Members and Senators could do the following:

1. Represent people
2. Make laws
3. Scrutinise the Government, and
4. Form a Government from among the elected Parliamentarians.

There are many other activities that take place in a Parliament such as radio and television broadcasting from the press gallery and printing reports and other documents in the basement.

The dominant spaces in Parliament House are the House of Representatives and the Senate. In these two chambers, Members and Senators meet, debate bills, and represent the people from their electorates and states.

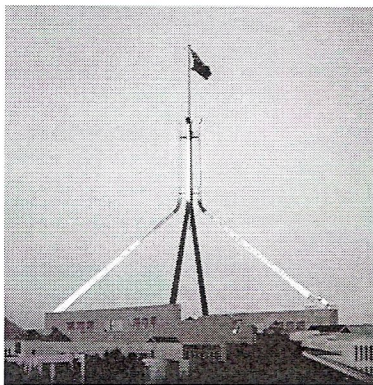
Below is a diagram showing the major areas found in Parliament House.





# Facts about Parliament House

- Parliament House has 44 lifts, 34 000 light fittings, 5000 works of art, 2116 covered car spaces, 12 500 public address system speakers, 113 cleaners' closets, 1300 taps, 6000 division lights, 2000 clocks and 30 000 items of electronic equipment.
- When Parliament House is sitting, it has more than 3500 people working there.
- Parliament House was built to last 200 years and beyond and it is one of the largest buildings in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Parliament House has 750 000 square metres of plasterboard (the same amount used in 2000 houses).
- There are 24 000 granite slabs on the curved wall which, placed end to end, would stretch 46 kilometres.
- The new Parliament House has six times the floor space of the old Parliament House.



- The site which Parliament House was built on is 640 metres in diameter. Parliament House occupies an area 300 metres long by 300 metres wide.
- The flagpole is 81 metres high and weighs 220 tonnes. The flag is 12.8 metres by 6.4 metres.
- It took 300 000 cubic metres of concrete (enough to build 25 Opera Houses) and 24 000 tonnes of steel reinforcing (half as much steel used in the Sydney Harbour Bridge).
- Parliament House was designed by Mitchell/Giugola and Thorpe Architects. Their design was chosen from 329 entries from 28 countries.
- 10 000 workers from 50 different ethnic backgrounds were involved in the construction of Parliament House and its fittings.
- Parliament House was officially opened on 9 May 1988.



# House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is sometimes called the People's House because Members are chosen to represent different parts of Australia, called electorates. Each electorate has about the same number of people in them. At each election, the people decide who should be their Member.



## **Why is the House of Representatives Green?**

When the provisional Parliament House was built in 1927, the Australian Parliament adopted the parliamentary colours of green and red. As green was the traditional colour of the British House of Commons, it was used in the House of Representatives chamber and surroundings. In the new Parliament House a distinctive shade of green, which is more typical of the Australian landscape, has been used to enhance our national identity.

## **How many Members are in the House of Representatives?**

There are currently 150 Members of the House of Representatives.

## **What do the Members do?**

A large proportion of their time is spent on electorate work where they come to know the people, local issues and problems. When Parliament is sitting, a Member's work in the chamber involves speaking on bills, important motions, ministerial statements and committee reports.

Members also attend community meetings and functions. They meet lobby groups, various community organisations, attend party meetings and many official functions.

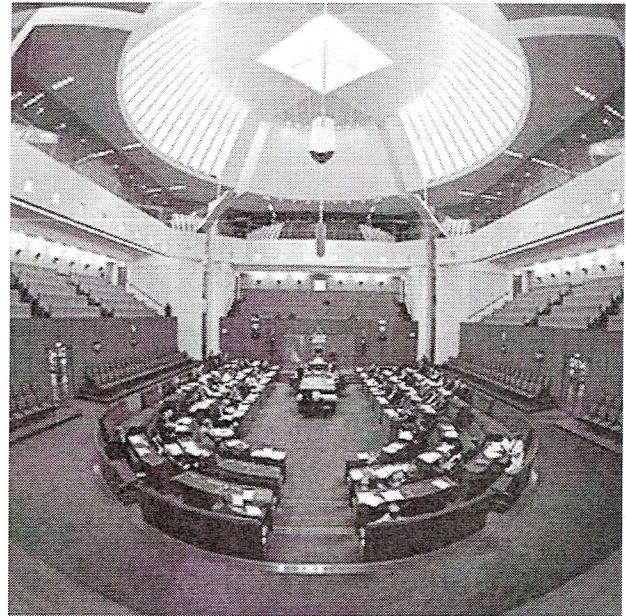
Work on parliamentary committees is an important part of a Members work. They:

- Conduct inquiries on bills and matters of national importance
- Collect information from experts, interest groups and witnesses
- Write reports



# Senate

The Senate is sometimes called the House of Review because the job of the Senate is to review ideas for new laws that come from the House of Representatives. There are 76 Senators (12 for each state and 2 for each Territory). Senators are elected by a system called "proportional representation". This means that the number of seats that each party gets is decided by how many votes the political party gets in an election.



## **Why is the Senate Red?**

Red is the colour used in the Senate, as it is the same colour used in the British House of Lords. The shade of red used in the Senate is more typical of that found in the Australian landscape.

## **How many members are in the Senate?**

There are 76 Senators

## **What do the Senators do?**

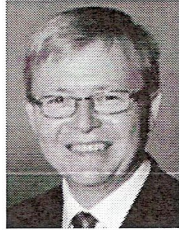
Senators represent whole states and territories. A lot of the Senators work is focused on considering bills in details, debating current issues, committee reports, ministerial statements and papers tabled by Ministers.

Work on Parliamentary committees is an important part of a Senator's work. They:

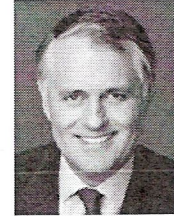
- Conduct inquiries on bills and other important national matters
- Collect information from experts, interest groups and witnesses
- Write reports

Senators also meet lobby groups, various community organisations and attend party meetings and many official functions.

# Who's Who in Federal Parliament



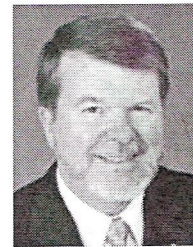
**Prime Minister**  
Kevin Rudd



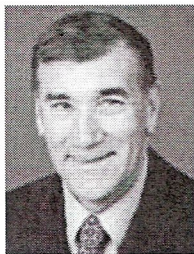
**Leader of the Opposition**  
(House of Representatives)  
Malcolm Turnbull

## Parties represented in the House of Representatives

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Australian Labor Party | 83 |
| Independents           | 2  |
| Liberal Party          | 55 |
| National Party         | 10 |



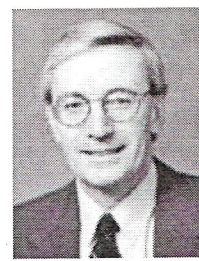
**Speaker of the House of Representatives**  
Harry Jenkins



**President of the Senate**  
John Hogg



**Leader of the Government (Senate)**  
Chris Evans



**Leader of the Opposition (Senate)**  
Nick Minchin



**Governor-General**  
Quentin Brice

## Parties represented in the Senate (from 1 July 2008)

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Australian Greens      | 5  |
| Australian Labor Party | 32 |
| Country Liberal Party  | 1  |
| Family First Party     | 1  |
| Liberal Party          | 32 |
| The Nationals/CLP      | 4  |



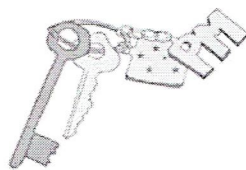
# The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister is the leader of the Federal Government and Australia's National leader.

The Prime Minister:

- Is an elected Member of Parliament in the House of Representatives and represents the people of one electorate
- Is elected by members of his/her political party to be the leader of that party.
- Forms the Government by recommending to the Governor General who should be the Cabinet Ministers
- Recommends to the Governor General who should be appointed as Justices in the High Court, as ambassadors and other senior positions
- Answers many of the questions during question time in the House of Representatives
- Chairs cabinet meetings
- Is the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. This department coordinates the other departments
- Decides when a Federal election is to be held
- Represents Australia in national and international meetings and events
- Recommends to the Monarch (the Queen) who should be the Governor-General

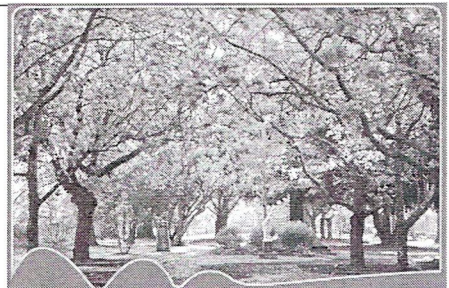
The Prime Minister attends Question Time in the House of Representatives every day.



The Prime Minister has  
two residences:  
the Lodge in Canberra and  
Kirribilli House in Sydney

## Did you know?

Jackson Park, Faulconbridge (Blue Mountains) has a corridor of Oak trees planted by all Australian Prime Ministers or their families. This is a living memorial of the leaders of Australia.



# Presiding Officers

The Presiding Officers are the Speaker and the President. The Speaker is in charge of the House of Representatives and the President is in charge of the Senate (just like a chairperson running a meeting).

The President and the Speaker are both responsible for the general running of Parliament House including security, maintenance, the Parliamentary Library, Hansard and other essential services. The Presiding Officers are also involved in many ceremonial duties and they often represent the Parliament in meetings.

## **The Speaker**

The Speaker makes sure that the rules of the House of Representatives (called the Standing Orders) are followed and that order is maintained. The Speaker is also the spokesperson for all the members of the House of Representatives in its dealings with the Government, the Senate and other Parliaments.

### **Selecting the Speaker**

The Speaker is one of the 150 members of the House of Representatives. At the beginning of each new Parliament (after an election), the members all vote to choose a new Speaker. A secret ballot (vote) is used to choose someone who has a lot of Parliamentary experience.

### **The Speaker is impartial**

The Speaker usually does not take part in debates. Even though the Speaker is a member of a political party, he or she should not take sides. The only time the Speaker can vote is when the votes are equal.

## **The President**

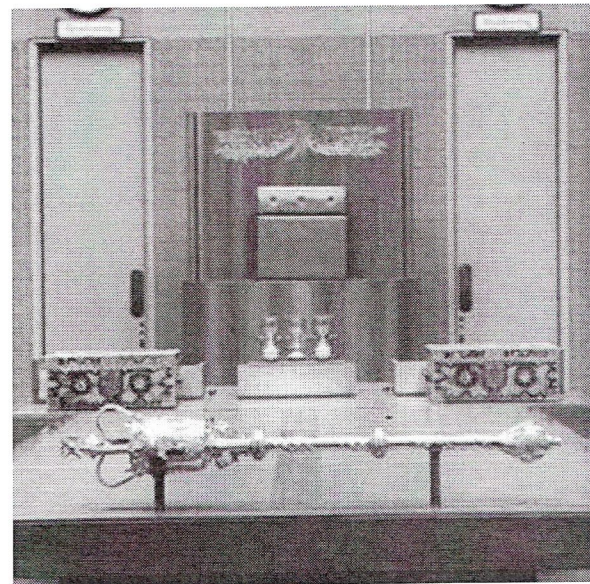
The President makes sure that all of the rules of the Senate are followed and that debates run smoothly. The President is the spokesperson for the Senate and all its dealings with the Government, the House of Representatives, other Parliaments and authorities.

### **Selecting the President**

The President is one of 76 Senators. The President is elected (using a secret ballot) on the first sitting day after a Senate Election.

### **Voting**

The President has a vote just like any other Senator (unlike the Speaker for the House of Representatives, who doesn't get to vote). The President usually does not take part in a debate leading up to a vote.



The Speakers Chair in the House of Representatives



# The Governor-General



Australia's Head of State  
Queen Elizabeth II

Australia's Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II. The Governor General represents the Queen. The Queen appoints the Governor-General to carry out duties on her behalf. The Prime Minister advises the Queen on who to appoint as Governor-General.

## Powers of the Governor-General

The powers of the Governor-General are set out in the Constitution. The Governor-General is not involved in everyday political matters.

The Governor-General is politically neutral, which means that he or she works with whatever parties are in Government.

## The Governor-General

- Signs bills passed by the Parliament (this is called the Royal Assent)
- Approves the appointment of senior judges and other officials.
- Signs rules and many other actions that Ministers must carry out.
- Is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The Minister for Defence formally advises the Governor-General on behalf of the Government.

## Ceremonial Duties

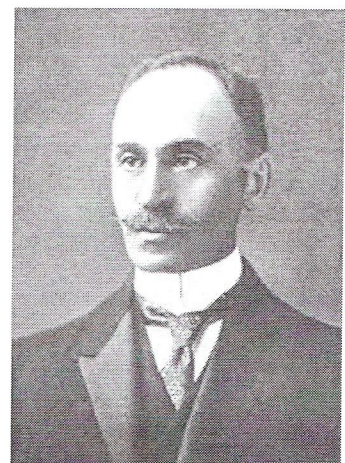
A part of the role of being Governor-General involves carrying out ceremonial duties. These duties include giving the oath of office (called "swearing in") to Ministers, judges and other officials. The Governor-General also meets foreign heads of states and ambassadors. The Governor-General reads a speech at the opening of the new session of Parliament about what the Government will do.

## Governor-Generals

The first Governor-General was the Earl of Hopetoun in 1901.

In 1931 the first Australian born Governor-General, Sir Isaac Isaacs was appointed.

Our current Governor-General is Quentin Brice, the first ever female to hold this position.



First Australian born Governor-General, Isaac Isaacs



# Question Time

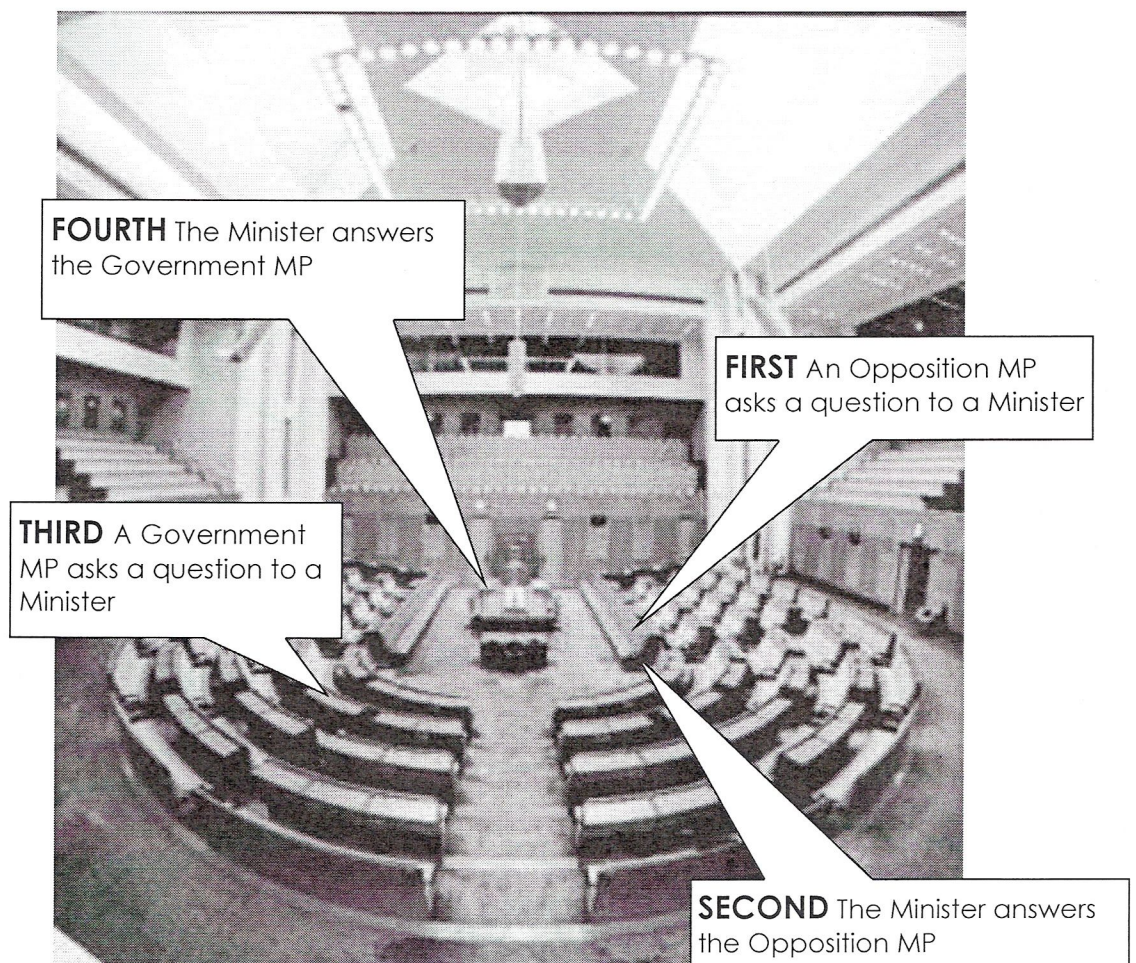
Question Time in the House of Representatives and the Senate is held at 2.00pm when Parliament is sitting on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

## What happens during question time?

Members of Parliament (MPs) can address '*questions on notice*' or '*questions without notice*' to particular Ministers. With questions without notice, Ministers do not know the questions that Opposition MPs are going to ask. Questions alternate between Government and Opposition MPs. Questions and answers should be brief.

## Who asks questions and who answers them?

This photo below shows question time in the House of Representatives. Question time in the Senate is very similar.





# The Budget



## What is the Budget?

The budget is a plan of how the Government is going to spend its money. Every May, the Treasurer announces the plan the Government has made for paying its normal running expenses and for new projects. A new budget is made every 12 months.

## Where does the money come from?

A part of a person's wage or salary is paid to the Government as income tax. More than half of the Governments budget comes from income tax.

## What happens when the budget has been announced?

The budget must be agreed to by the Parliament before the money can be spent. This is because the budget is a Government proposal, just like any other bill.

Once both Houses of Parliament agree on the budget, it is sent to the Governor-General who signs them and they become law.

## The Opposition and the budget

The Opposition usually has different views on how money should be raised and spent. The Leader of the Opposition expresses these views during a debate on the budget bills, when he/she is given a special opportunity to reply to the Treasurer's budget speech.



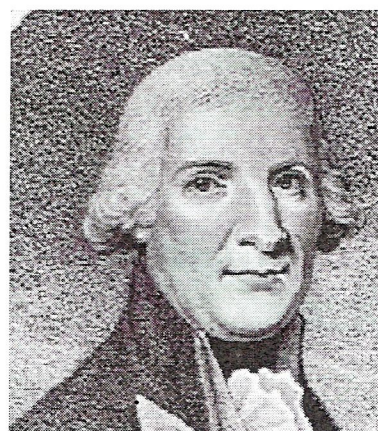
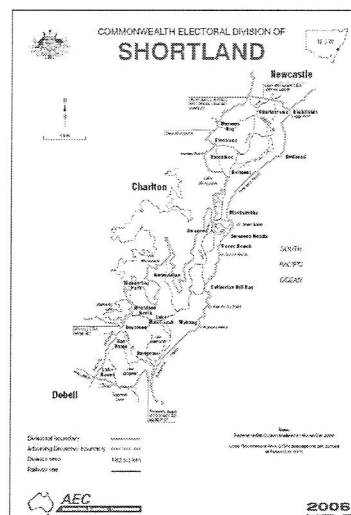
# Your Federal Electorate: SHORTLAND

Your Federal Electorate is called Shortland.

## What suburbs are in Shortland?

It is made up of the following suburbs:

- Belmont
- Belmont North
- Belmont South
- Bennetts Green
- Blacksmiths
- Budgewoi
- Buff Point
- Cams Wharf
- Catherine Hill Bay
- Caves Beach
- Chain Valley Bay
- Charlestown
- Charmhaven
- Croudace Bay
- Doyalson
- Dudley
- Eleebana
- Floraville
- Gateshead
- Gorokan
- Gwandalan
- Halekulani
- Highfields
- Hillsborough
- Jewells
- Kahibah
- Kotara South
- Lake Haven
- Lake Munmorah
- Mannering Park
- Marks Point
- Mount Hutton
- Nords Wharf
- Pelican
- Redhead
- San Remo
- Summerland Point
- Swansea
- Swansea Heads
- Tingira Heights
- Valentine
- Warners Bay
- Whitebridge
- Windale

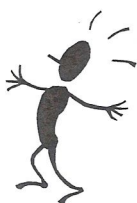


## Where did Shortland get its name?

The electorate is named after John Shortland (1769-1810), a naval officer who first came to Australia as master's mate in the *Sirius* when the First Fleet sailed for Australia. Shortland spent nearly five years in Australia, including eleven months on Norfolk Island where the *Sirius* was wrecked in 1790. In 1794 he returned to Australia with the new governor Hunter in the *Reliance* as first lieutenant. On 9 September 1797, while on his way to Port Stephens in pursuit of some runaway convicts, Shortland entered the estuary of the Hunter River. During his brief stay, Shortland named the river, though for some years it was often referred to as the Coal River, made the first chart of the harbour in the form of an eye-sketch and collected some samples of coal. In a letter to his father, Shortland predicted that his discovery would prove 'a great acquisition to the settlement'. John Shortland was active, diligent and courageous and his career was the epitome of all the best in a naval officer of the period. His name is commemorated in a suburb of Newcastle, the city whose site he had explored in 1797.



# SHORTLAND continued



## How big is Shortland?

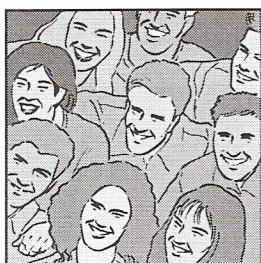
Shortland is approximately 110 square kilometres.

## When was Shortland first established?

1948

## Who was the first Federal Member for Shortland?

The first Federal Member for Shortland was Charles Edward Griffiths who served from 1949 to 1972. Peter Frederick Morris was then the Federal Member from 1972 to 1998. In 1998 Jill Hall was elected to be the Federal Member for Shortland and is still the current member.



## How many people live in Shortland?

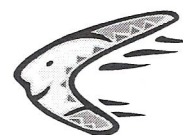
123,945 (from 2006 census)

## What is the Median Age of people living in Shortland?

41 years old (from 2006 census)

## How many Indigenous Australians live in Shortland?

2929 (from 2006 census)



## How many people living in Shortland were born overseas?

12064 (from 2006 census)

## How many people in Shortland speak a language other than English at home?

3977 (from 2006 census)

## What State Electorates are in Shortland?

Shortland includes parts of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly electorates of Charlestown, Swansea and Wyong.